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Approved For Release 2006/01/17 : CIA-RDP91-00901R000600420002-7

22 December 1984

# Debate on Security: Educated Views

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21 — The debate on national security versus freedom of information, long a staple in Washington, dominated discussion in the capital this week. It was prompted by The Washington Post's publication of details of the secret payload of the space shuttle mission scheduled for next month, and the condemnation of the newspaper's article by Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger.

The New York Times sought comments on the controversy from several Washingtonians prominent in the fields of national security and the press. Excerpts follow.

Gen. David C. Jones, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

Unfortunately, we have arrived at a point of great confrontation between the press and the Government on national security issues and I hope that we can come to an understanding on the needs of a free press and the needs of national security.

At this point, I think that we have gone too far in revealing information with an impact on national security. The combination of leaks, a reporter putting together bits and pieces of information, creates lots of problems between the Government and the media.

I may be prejudiced, but I feel that when in doubt, you should lean toward the national security side.

Eric Sevareid, television commentator:

A great illusion exists about national security. Our true security lies in peace itself. Our weaponry and soldiery provide the first line of defense of our territory and our vital interests abroad. But our first line of defense of peace lies in the preservation of America's free institutions and civil liberties, including the First Amendment liberties.

If we gradually become like the Soviets — secretive, paranoid, politically neurotic — then world tensions would ultimately become unbearable. Hitler said that the strength of the totalitarian states is that they force their enemies to imitate them. I have an unhappy feeling that this Administration, however unintentionally, is edging us down that path.

Stansfield M. Turner, Director of Central Intelligence under President Carter:

I think the press is being very hypocritical. Most agreed with Weinberger on the need for secrecy and then when The Post published their story, which

was unconscionable, all the others used it as excuse to go ahead and print. One day the mission deserves secrecy and then the next they jump on the bandwagon.

I think the press ought to apply the following rule: Is what they are going to print really going to educate the American people? The details of the satellite The Washington Post printed were not issues of particular importance to the American public.

I. F. Stone, the journalist:

One thing puzzles me. This is the first time in my 44 years in Washington that I have ever heard of calling a press conference to announce that you were going to do something secret. If you want to keep a hold on it and secret, why scurry around town asking people please not to print it? That's the surest way of getting it in print.

Now, the second thing that bothers me is that this test on Jan. 23 is going to be a shuttle that is going to carry some commercial testing and some military testing. If you really want to keep it secret, why not carry off military testing under the cover of a commercial test?

Of course, I am not arguing that there is never an occasion when a government has no right to withhold information. Every law, including homicide, has its exceptions, but its irrelevant to an incident in which the Pentagon flaunts a secret operation as if to deliberately invite maximum visibility.

William E. Colby, former Director of Central Intelligence:

Government has a legitimate call for secrecy for some of its activities and there is a tension between that and the desire of public and the press especially to know everything. I think that this tension is healthy. It's part of our constitutional system.

There is however, some information that should not be revealed. It remains a judgment call that we wrestle with every day.

On occasion the press has revealed

things when they shouldn't have and on occasion I'm sure the Government has withheld information when it wasn't entirely necessary.

I think that this Administration is trying to get better discipline than perhaps there was in the past.

James R. Schlesinger, former Secretary of Defense and Director of Central Intelligence:

Balancing the claims of press freedom and security must ultimately rest on a rule of reason. This society, quite rightly, is unprepared to sacrifice either. For this reason one grows uneasy in times that the press and government are hurling absolutes at one another. It is regrettable and risky that the Government cannot maintain security for its essential though fragile intelligence activities.

But security has been breaking down for a generation. That breakdown reflects a loss of national consensus policy. Not only is the press less inhibited. Not only has the Congress been brought into such matters (members and staff are not invariably reticent!). Above all, there has been a breakdown of discipline within the executive branch.

To preserve secrecy, especially in a democracy, security must be part of an accepted pattern of behavior, outside of government and inside. Regrettably, we no longer have such a pattern.

Restoring effective security arrangements, short of a sense of shared and immediate danger, can only come from within the executive branch and by example. Unless the nation's leaders demonstrate that they respect the security rules and will not violate those rules to score political points against rivals or make their speeches more colorful, those further down the hierarchy will continue gushing (euphemistically called "leaking"). Rather than being prepared to suspend curiosity in selected areas, the press will find it too tempting to refrain from publishing the wealth of information all too readily available.